



# TEACHING OF STATISTICS IN THE HEALTH SCIENCES

Section of the American Statistical Association

DECEMBER 1994

## Memorial to Richard Remington

Remarks by **Tony Schork**, University of  
Michigan

as presented at ASA Annual Meeting in Toronto

Thanks Ralph. It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to have been asked to speak at this memorial session in memory of Dick Remington. I took the opportunity to review Dr. Remington's curriculum vitae in preparing for my comments today. It is an extraordinarily rich source of information about Dick and inspiring in its indication of tremendous productivity.

Dick Remington was born in Idaho in 1931. He obtained both bachelors and masters degrees in mathematics from the University of Montana and Masters of Public Health and doctorate degrees in biostatistics from the University of Michigan. His academic posts are indicative of a most distinguished career ranging from faculty positions to administrative leadership roles at Texas, Michigan, and Iowa. It was a difficult task to select only a few from the large number of highlights and outstanding characteristics of Dick's honors and activities - a most impressive list.

I met Dick Remington in June of 1960 when I was a prospective graduate student in biostatistics at the University of Michigan and Dick was a moderately novice assistant professor. Even at that early stage of his career he had a presence, both physically and in his demeanor. He was tall (about 6'3"), lean, had a butch and

was sans facial hair - not predictive of his latter day flowing hair and magnificent mustache. His style and manner of speaking simultaneously projected friendliness, knowledge and the kind of ambition that bespoke of a man who should be heard and followed. Here was a budding Renaissance man in both the academic and life realms.

It was my good fortune to have been admitted to the Department of Biostatistics to pursue a doctoral degree. This venue afforded a wonderful forum for me to first observe and then attempt to imitate Dick's considerable academic skills. Dick quickly grasped and mastered the trifold aspects of professional existence: teaching, research, and service. He had career credentials in each of these areas. What follows are a few personal reminiscences about Dick's teaching and research. His service to the health sector is legion both as an administrator and as an advocate for the future of public health, and will be remembered by other speakers today.

As a student in a number of Dick's courses, assimilation of the material was a smooth and enjoyable experience. Of import equal to the content of the classes for me was the opportunity to benefit firsthand and, several years later, try to emulate the delivery of this marvelous teacher. His presentations were clear, crisp and eminently entertaining - wit was his favorite tool to keep his lectures focused and fun.

My personal tutoring by Dick Remington

continued through my dissertation. Thereafter, I was fortunate to become a neophyte colleague of Dick's at Michigan - a superb way to have my meager teaching skills honed daily and to be guided in developing research acumen.

Dick was my mentor and collaborator on several studies related to hypertension and heart disease - research topics which have remained of especial interest to me for thirty years. He was a keen contributor to these projects, always well-prepared, incisive and directed. He was able to see the kernels of knowledge and relevance usually much quicker than others. He was straightforward but never blunt; eloquent but never glib, focused but never myopic, humorous but never cynical, optimistic but never euphoric. He was always able to articulate difficult concepts in a lucid, affable and persuasive manner.

In 1966 I was the recipient of a singular honor from Dick. He asked me to coauthor a textbook on the basics of biostatistics. At that time there were only a spare number of such volumes - we were pioneers. It was a golden opportunity for me as a junior faculty member to be associated with Dick on this project. I can modestly laud our book because its style, its content, its humor are all products of Dick's hand and mind. He drafted the entire manuscript in a six-month period while on sabbatical in England - a tour de force of brilliance and industriousness. I waited in Ann Arbor for successive chapters of this informative compilation of biostatistical techniques and lore. It was as though Dick were a twentieth century Charles Dickens writing one of his novels to be perused by his readers in monthly installments. My job was to edit, find examples, create exercises, obtain permission for use of statistical tables and to return the amended copy quickly to London. It was an exhilarating and productive period and a happy memory.

Our book has been praised and criticized. More than one reader has complained, "How could

you make jokes about such a serious topic as statistics?" Well, those readers did not know Dick Remington and it was their loss.

I am proud to say I knew him as a friend. Outside the confines of the university Dick's vitality and eclectic interests were well-known and much appreciated - ranging from his rich interest in music, highlighted by his remarkable proficiency on the tuba, to his strong support and wry critiques of Michigan's athletic teams.

Dick left his mark at Michigan and on me. It is a pleasure to have indelibly experienced and learned from this humane being - this modern Man for all Seasons.

**Richard D. Remington**  
(1931-1992)

**Education:**

1952	B.A.	University of Montana (mathematics)
1954	M.A.	University of Montana (mathematics)
1957	M.P.H.	University of Michigan (biostatistics)
1958	Ph.D.	University of Michigan (biostatistics)
1984	Sc.D.	University of Montana (honorary)

**Academic Positions:**

1958-1969	Assistant to Full Professor, Biostatistics, University of Michigan
1969-1974	Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Biometry, University of Texas
1974-1982	Dean School of Public Health, University of Michigan
1982-1988	Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculties, University of Iowa
1982-1992	Distinguished Professor of Preventive Medicine and Environmental Health, University of Iowa

1987-1989 Interim President, University of Iowa  
1989-1992 Director of the Institute for Health, Behavior and Environmental Policy, University of Iowa

**Honors (selected):**

Fellow, American Statistical Association  
Fellow, American Public Health Association  
Fellow, Royal Statistical Society  
Albert Lasker Special Public Health Award of American Public Health Association  
Award of Merit and Golden Heart Award, American Heart Association  
Member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences  
National Merit Award for Outstanding Achievement in Public Health, National Public Health Honorary Society

**Other Positions (selected)**

President of the Association of Schools of Public Health  
Vice-President for Research and Vice-President for Academic Councils of the American Heart Association  
Chair of the Institute of Medicine Committee on the Future of Public Health  
Member, Ann Arbor City Council

**Review of TSHS, 1994  
by Michael J. Symons, Chair**

As the rising Past Chair of the Teaching of Statistics in the Health Sciences (TSHS), I offer these comments on the business meeting in Toronto and the past year.

**!!! Computerized Newsletter !!!**

A solid opportunity seems to have surfaced to go electronic with our Newsletter. Our thanks go to Peter Imrey for his vision in the area years ago. Such a media should speed delivery, probably save money, and also expand the services TSHS could provide its members. Of particular value in Peter's mind was the ability to share examples and data sets for teaching.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter is more about the Journal of Statistics Education (JSE) and the JSE Information Service, the suggested home for TSHS Newsletter. Our thanks go to Jacquelin Dietz, the editor of JSE, and Tim Arnold, the JSE computerized communications expert, for this briefing at the TSHS Executive meeting in Toronto. Peter was there as well, offering interest and support for this prospect. Thank you, Peter!

**!!!Excess Funds!!!**

Our modest financial balance (-\$10K) prompted a variety of expenditure categories at the 1994 annual business meeting. Among the sentiments were offering prizes for papers at the annual meeting, encouraging student participation (their dues were increased from \$5 to \$1 starting in 1995), supporting continuing education courses, subsidizing medical student input on the teaching of biostatistics (being pursued for 1995 by Stephen Looney), and providing computerized access to the TSHS Newsletter and shared teaching examples and data. Now seems a good time to coordinate the expenditure of our resources towards what we want from our TSHS Section membership. Please direct your thoughts, suggestions and proposals to accomplish those goals to the 1995 TSHS Section Chair, Robert A. Wolfe.

As a personal inclination beyond those that I've supported above, I would like to see us explore the creation of a "named" lecture for the annual meetings. Excellence in teaching, research or consulting in the health sciences could be the grounds for judging potential recipients. Send your ideas to Robert A. Wolfe at The University of Michigan, Biostatistics, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1189; telephone (313) 764-5450.

**\*\*\*TSHS Charter Revision on Hold\*\*\***

After reflecting on the reactions to the proposed changes at the annual meeting and learning that ASA has not yet finished its review of the ASA

Board Representative office, it seems premature to revise a functioning, valid TSHS Charter. Rather, (1) we should continue to have the Chair appoint the Program Chair-Elect and to include this officer in the annual business and executive meetings. Deborah Dawson has agreed to fill this role in 1995 for the 1996 annual meeting. (2) We should await the ASA's review of the ASA Board Representative office. Beth Dawson is fulfilling these responsibilities admirably for TSHS. (3) With our modest growth in members, despite great flux brought on by the recent variety of ASA membership options, the need for a membership officer is not pressing.

**---THANKS TO 1994 TSHS OFFICERS---**

Let me take this opportunity to thank each of the officers for jobs well done, officially and unofficially (Stephen!), on behalf of the TSHS Section and myself as 1994 Chair.

Michael J. Symons (Chair)  
Michael H. Kutner (Program Chair)  
Steven J. Verhulst (Publication Officer)



Beth Dawson (ASA Board Representative)  
Robert A. Wolfe (Chair-Elect)  
Stephen Looney (Program Chair-Elect)  
Ruth M. Mickey (Secretary-Treasurer)  
Robert C. Elston (Past Chair)

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